

ZENITH NEWS

Supporting Transsexuals in British Columbia

Fall 2001

The Zenith Digest is no more

Format "too much work for one person" says Editor.

Joanne McCracken, who has been editor of the Zenith Digest since December of 1999, and layout editor as well since February of 2000, has decided she cannot commit the amount of time needed to publish the Zenith newsletter in its old format. The magazine format was begun by Diane O'Brien in 1997, with the original publishing team consisting of Diane, Stephanie Heal, Tamara Sale, and Sarah Wilson. It was hoped that a professional looking journal would attract enough advertisers to pay for itself.

This did not happen, although some advertising revenue was gained. As time went on, members of the original team dropped out, finally leaving most of the work to Joanne, who volunteered to try and do it herself. With help from computer layout expert Tamara, and ad-

vice from Diane and Stephanie, Joanne spent many hours learning PageMaker, a commonly used professional desktop publishing programme. "Things were pretty difficult at first, and I make many mistakes," said Joanne, "I gradually learned some of the do's and don't of publishing, but it took up a lot of time. It still takes up more of my time than I am willing to spend. I am getting involved more in my local community, and have other interests which I want to devote more time to."

Beside researching stories and photos, Joanne delivered and picked up material at the printer's, and with the help of Tamara, stuffed and labelled envelopes for mailing. The task of stamping and putting the rather heavy box of envelopes in the mail was done by Stephanie, not an easy job for someone in her mid-70's.

"With Stephanie deciding to bow out of the directorship, and only a handful active directors left, publishing a large and comprehensive newsmagazine does not fit in with the size of the organization," Joanne said. "I don't see any big lineup of people who want to take over the job."

The new format will be made as simple as possible, with a focus on local and Canadian stories and information. The size of each issue will depend on the quantity items received. Advertising will be discontinued. Those wishing to send articles and letters are requested to send them as .rtf format attachments to the Zenith hotmail address: <zenithfoundation@hotmail.com> or Fax: (604) 266-4469

Small turnout for AGM

The Zenith Annual General Meeting was held on Saturday Sept. 22nd at the Unitarian Church Hall. A minimum quorum of ten people showed up to choose a new board for the coming year. Jemma Downes, Tamara Dukai, and Joani Duncan offered their services as members at large and three members from the past year offered to stay on. Angelika Dohmann, Gayle Roberts and Joanne McCracken offered to try and hold things together for another year. The problem of member apathy is apparent with low turnouts at meetings and paid up memberships. "Only 50 people out of more than 150 have paid dues so far," commented secretary treasurer Angelika.

Joanne commented that it would

have cost \$2400 per issue to have a printer do the layout. "At that rate, I have done about \$21,600 worth of free labor." Joanne offered to try and do a scaled down newsletter, noting that this should lower costs considerably.

Stephanie added that the value of her work on the Kavanaugh case would have added up to a large number as well. She guessed that nearly a three-quarters of a million dollars have been spent on hearings, lawyers, etc. Zenith paid Stephanie for travel costs, etc., but she spent many hours working for free in the company of high priced lawyers.

Tamara Sale pointed out that many people who join Zenith and transition typically lose interest in the organization once their transition is com-

plete. The population who has the most to benefit from Zenith is the one that contains those who are exploring, beginning transition, or are in the transition process. Once people have settled in to their new lives, Zenith becomes irrelevant. The people who make the best use of Zenith are those who are transitioning, and their families and friends.

Gayle said that in the future, people thinking of transition will need support more than ever, given the economic and political climate of BC. Those who have had their surgery paid for by MSP, may consider themselves lucky. She regretted that more people have not shown interest in contributing, and concluded that she was not willing to be president after this year.

Tough times ahead

Editorial

by Joanne McCracken



When you think about it, the Zenith Digest was probably a pretty crazy thing for a for a small group to do in the first place, but now that member apathy has reached a new height (zenith?), there seems little point to carrying on. If the organization is of value to anyone, one would think that questioning or transitioning people would want to get involved. After all, they are the ones who best stand to benefit. Instead, it is the same old gang that tries to keep things going.

Post transition members have little need for support groups. They have made their transition and just want to get on with their lives. I too have concerns in my life which have nothing to do with being transsexual.

Transition has been a very difficult, painful, and emotionally draining time for me.

But now that I'm settled in to my new gender, the topic of gender dysphoria and sex change is pretty much on the back burner, even though there's still an ongoing battle with facial hair and SRS coming up next spring.

Since becoming editor of the Digest I have probably put more than a thousand hours into it, so I think I've done my bit.

Frankly I believe that Zenith would have died long ago if it wasn't for Stephanie, who served as an anchor for our little group long after she had had surgery. At age 75, Steph wants to bow out, and who can blame her?

We have two support groups which

seem to be of value for a small number of people in Surrey and Victoria, as well as a web page which may be of some use. But when only ten members out of 150 show for the AGM, and only one third have paid their dues, you have to ask, "why bother?"

Thus the reason for the newsletter. Nothing fancy, nothing special, just a few jottings from people who care.

Things do not look good for people transitioning in British Columbia, given the attitude of the present government which is looking for any way it can to cut "unnecessary" medical costs. People with gender dysphoria (a very small group with very little political clout) are sitting ducks. Let us hope they feel we are too insignificant to bother with.

Transsexual wins right to be housed in women's prison

TASNews@communities.msn.com

Sept. 2001

The Canadian correctional service has been ordered to provide sex reassignment surgery to transsexuals in prison in appropriate cases, and then to house them in the facility of their new gender, a Canadian Human Rights Tribunal has ruled. Synthia Kavanagh, a male to female transsexual who was housed in a male prison, had filed a human rights complaint after hormone therapy she had been taking before going to prison was discontinued. Kavanagh argued that she is a woman who has suffered from a disability, gender dysphoria (transsexualism), and should be treated as a woman with a medical problem. She sought a change in Corrections Canada policies under which pre-operative male to female transsexual prisoners were housed in male prison facilities and under which sex reassignment surgery was prohibited while an individual was incarcerated. The Zenith Foundation, an organization benefiting transsexuals, intervened in support of Kavanagh.

Kavanagh was successful in both aspects of her claim. The Canadian Human Rights Tribunal agreed that the current policy of housing male to female transsexuals among the male population was discriminatory because it did not take into

account the special vulnerabilities of transsexuals as a group. It required Corrections Canada to assess transsexuals and their housing needs individually in consultation with a physician expert

in the treatment of gender dysphoria, and gave Corrections Canada six months to develop an appropriate housing policy for transsexual inmates.

The tribunal also held that the absolute ban on sex reassignment surgery was unwarranted and discriminatory, and required that Corrections Canada amend its policy to permit incarcerated individuals who had completed the qualifying period for sex reassignment surgery before going to jail to have the necessary surgery where it was recommended by their physicians, and to have the surgery at the expense of Corrections Canada.

Kavanagh herself had sex reassignment surgery in 2000, further to a settlement of her individual complaint against Corrections Canada, and is currently completing her sentence in a women's correctional facility.

barbara findlay was counsel for Synthia Kavanagh with respect to her individual complaint. Stephanie Castle appeared for the Zenith Foundation, an organization

benefiting transsexuals which appeared at the hearing.

Castle is the author of "Prisoner of Gender", a biography of Katherine Johnson, another transsexual who did time in Canadian prisons.

And the legal wrangling continues....

The Attorney General of Canada is appealing the human rights ruling. The tribunal has applied for a judicial review so that their case will stand and the decision will be upheld.

All the money that has been spent paying lawyers on this case could pay for many SRS operations. Ed.

Nixon featured in Canadian edition of Elle.

The November Elle magazine (Cdn. Ed.) has an article about Vancouver TS Kimberly Nixon. Kim's suit against the Vancouver Rape Crises made headlines over a year ago. The Human Rights Tribunal as yet to bring down a decision.

President's Annual report

by Gayle Roberts



First let me welcome you to our Annual General Meeting. This meeting, as I will discuss in more detail later, is one of great importance since it will determine the future direction of Zenith as an organization.

Before we get to that, however, I would like to thank a number of people who have supported Zenith over the past year. Looking outside of the lower mainland to Victoria, two people immediately come to mind. One is Jim Scammell who created and maintains a wonderful web page for Zenith. If you have not yet visited our web page you should do so as soon as you can at www.zenithfoundation.ca. The other person we owe a big vote of thanks to is Audrey Scammell. She has provided her (and Jim's) home to the Victoria/Vancouver Island Chapter of Zenith and has held regular Support Group meetings. She has helped organize many social functions and spearheaded a raffle as a means of raising money. Audrey has also been very active behind the scenes lobbying government on behalf of the transsexual community. To both of you a very big vote of thanks.

Returning to the lower mainland, I would like to thank Roz Shakespeare, Charlene Bozoian and Joan Duncan for the support they provided Zenith members as leaders of our Surrey/New Westminster support group. They, through their interpersonal skills and making their homes available, enabled this Group to continue to provide support for many of our members.

We also need to thank all those people who contributed to the *Digest* and also to those who actually published our flagship periodical. The regular contributors to the *Digest* are Melissa Tulloch who has drawn many wonderful cartoons. We must also thank Stephanie Castle, Petra Cummings, Jenny Mars, and the *Digest's* editor Joanne McCracken who have made the effort to write articles of interest to our community. In terms of the actual production of the *Digest* we must thank in particular two people who have spent literally hundreds of hours putting the *Digest* "to bed". They are Joanne McCracken and Tamarah Sale. Without both of you there would not be a *Digest*. Thanks to everyone who submitted material for publication.

Your Board members also deserve a very large vote of thanks. The past year has been an extremely difficult one in terms of providing the services that our members have enjoyed over the past few years with so few people to do the work. This time last year four members were acclaimed to the Board. Later, Stephanie Castle was appointed as a support Director. I would like to thank Lesley Stephens who arranged our Christmas dinner. Unfortunately she was unable to continue as a Director, so the Board for most of the past year has consisted of only four members. First, let me thank Stephanie Castle for the tireless work she has done - in particular in the area of human rights for transsexuals. Over the past two years, she has represented Zenith's intervention in the Kavanagh case before the Federal Human Rights Tribunal concerning the human rights of prisoners and their access to adequate medical care for their transsexual condition. Stephanie played a significant role in bringing this case to a successful conclusion. The refusal to grant gender re-assignment surgery to prisoners has now been lifted. All transsexuals and in particular those in the prison system, owe Stephanie a great deal for supporting them. I have already thanked Joanne McCracken for all the work she did on editing and producing the *Digest*. The third Board member I think we all owe a great vote of thanks to is Angelika Domann. Angelika volunteered to be Zenith's secretary, treasurer and membership director. As if these tasks were not enough, Angelika organized the highly successful tribute dinner last year for Pat Diewold and Stephanie Castle. This was without a doubt our most successful social function. Thank you so much Angelika.

Now I must move to the topic of Zenith's future. In the last issue of the *Digest* and in a separate *Newsletter* I outlined the crisis faced by Zenith. In short it is the lack of "new blood". This meeting will decide the future of Zenith. Will we simply fade away or move on to bigger and better things for Zenith? In terms of the *Digest*, will it continue as a quality periodical or will it simply become a brief *Newsletter* or even cease publication? Without volunteers, the outcome is obvious. Today you have the opportunity to elect a new and

dynamic Board. You will be asked to elect six directors from our membership of Active members. Your new Board, at its discretion, may appoint up to three Associate members to the Board. Three of your present Directors have volunteered to stand for office. They are Angelika Domann, Joanne McCracken and myself. Assuming you re-elect us, we need other Directors and other volunteers. Joanne, or whoever takes on the position of *Digest* editor, needs support. Without adequate support, Zenith will dissolve or at best just hang on in the hope that in the future a new dynamic Board will be elected. With volunteers, Zenith will be able to continue as a viable organization and grow to become even better in terms of its role of supporting its members, educating the public regarding transsexual issues and advocating with government and industry for the rights of transsexuals. Which of these options is the future of Zenith? You, the members of Zenith, will determine our future.

Thank you,

Gayle Roberts,
President, The Zenith Foundation,
September 22, 2001

New TV series shows TS character in positive light

"The Education of Max Bickford", a new show about the mid-life crisis of a university professor promises to handle the topic of transsexuality in an enlightened way. The first three episodes have lived up to this idea, even though the sex change of Max's best friend is only one of many issues that are shaking the good professor out of his rut. The main character, Bickford, is played by Richard Dreyfus, and "Erica" (formerly "Steve") is played by Canadian actress Helen Shaver. The acting and writing is first class, and the show is worth a look. The TS character is portrayed as a normal person, which is a nice change from the usual guy-in-a-dress or sex trade worker.

It can be seen Sundays on CBS at 8:00 pm.

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ZENITH SUPPORT GROUPS

All groups meet twice monthly.
For information contact the group leader.
Open only to members of the Zenith Foundation or
their families, otherwise by invitation of the group
leader

VICTORIA/SOUTH VANCOUVER ISLAND
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PAMPHLETS

Zenith Pamphlets are available free from Richmond Book. Send us your request with a self- addressed stamped No. 10 envelope

- 1 About the Zenith Foundation
- 2 About Gender Dysphoria
- 3 It's a Matter of Common Courtesy: Gender Dysphoria in
the Workplace
- 4 Zenith Support Groups and Associated Activities
- 5 Transsexual Children and Youth
- 6 The Children of Transsexuals & Gender Dysphoria in
the Parent

CHRISTMAS PARTY SUNDAY DECEMBER 9TH

Unitarian Church Hall
49th and Oak
Vancouver, BC
1:00 - 5:00 pm

*Turkey dinner and all the trimmings - \$10 per person. Ticket money must be received at our
mailbox by November 15th. If insufficient tickets are sold by then, (20 members) the dinner will
be cancelled and money refunded.*

Zenith on the web

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